Building a Skills-Based Workforce Architecture

Aligning Talent Strategy to Organizational Capability & Performance



Matching the right talent to the right work is critical – yet many health care organizations lack a structured approach defining, developing, and deploying their workforce effectively.

While a job architecture provides the foundation by organizing roles by function, level, and responsibility, skills architecture builds on it by identifying what each role requires to perform and advance.

Without an effective combination of the two, workforce decisions from hiring and job design to career pathing and succession are made ad hoc. This can lead to misaligned roles, underutilized talent, and missed organizational potential.

A well-designed skills architecture builds directly on job architecture by defining:

1. What skills matter within each role and level
2. How they connect to performance, pay, and career development
3. How employees can grow across the organization

If these challenges sound familiar, a structured skills architecture review may be overdue.

Consider the following:

- Does your organization lack a common language to describe skills across roles and functions?
- Are job descriptions inconsistent or disconnected from actual skill requirements?
- Do employees have limited visibility into career pathways or skill development opportunities?
- Is it difficult to identify internal talent for new or evolving roles?
- Are workforce planning efforts hampered by a lack of skills data and role clarity?
- Does compensation feel misaligned with the complexity and scope of skills required?
- Are leaders operating without clear expectations around the skills needed to succeed?

Your responses can reveal meaningful gaps in workforce strategy, role design, talent mobility, and organizational capabilities. If left unaddressed, these can impede growth, increase turnover – all while limiting your return on workforce investment.

But where can you start?

1. **Define Your Skills Taxonomy**
Identify and categorize the core, technical, and leadership skills relevant across your workforce. Anchor the taxonomy to your established job architecture to align skills to job families, functions, and levels already defined in your role framework.

2. **Audit Current Role Definitions & Job Architecture**
Review existing job architecture – titles, levels, job families, and pay structures – to ensure it is current before layering on skills. Assess job descriptions for consistency and alignment to actual skill requirements. A sound job architecture is the prerequisite to a meaningful skills architecture.

3. **Map Skills to Roles and Levels**
Establish a structured skill-to-role matrix that defines expected proficiency levels within each job family, using your job architecture's leveling framework to distinguish entry, intermediate, and advanced performers consistently across the organization.

4. **Align to Career Pathways**
Design transparent progression frameworks that show employees how skills translate into advancement – both laterally and vertically – across the job families and levels defined in your job architecture.

5. **Integrate with Compensation Design**
Align pay structures and incentive frameworks – grounded in your job architecture's leveling and market data – to skills complexity and proficiency levels, ensuring equitable and competitive compensation across roles.

6. **Connect to Performance Management**
Embed skills expectations into performance goals, review criteria, and development planning to reinforce accountability and growth.

7. **Build the Infrastructure**
Implement tools and processes to capture, track, and analyze skills data across the workforce, enabling workforce planning, gap analysis, and talent mobility decisions.

8. **Design a Change Management and Communication Plan**
Equip leaders and employees with resources to understand the skills framework. Conduct rollout sessions and establish feedback loops to support adoption.

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SullivanCotter partners with health care organizations to design and implement skills architecture frameworks that drive measurable workforce outcomes from improved role clarity and career mobility to stronger retention and workforce ROI.

Contact us to learn more

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